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RESEARCH OUTLINE

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Rhode Island

FAMILY HISTORY LIBRARY™
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This outline describes major sources of information about families from Rhode Island. As you read this outline, study the *United States Research Outline* (30972), which will help you understand terminology and the contents and uses of genealogical records.

RECORDS OF THE FAMILY HISTORY LIBRARY™

The Family History Library has many of the records described in this outline. The Family History Library's major holdings include cemetery, census, church, land, military, probate, town, and vital records as well as newspaper notices of marriages and deaths, city directories, genealogical collections, and periodicals.

Some of the sources described in this outline list the Family History Library's book, microfilm, and microfiche numbers. These are preceded by *FHL,* the abbreviation for *Family History Library.* These numbers may be used to locate materials in the library and to order microfilm and microfiche at Family History Centers™.

FAMILY HISTORY LIBRARY CATALOG™

The library's records are listed in the Family History Library Catalog™ found at the library and at each Family History Center™. To find a record, look in the Locality Search of the Family History Library Catalog for:

- The *place* where your ancestor lived, such as:

  UNITED STATES - CENSUS
  RHODE ISLAND - MILITARY RECORDS
  RHODE ISLAND, WASHINGTON - GENEALOGY
  RHODE ISLAND, WASHINGTON, SOUTH KINGSTON - VITAL RECORDS

- The *record type* you want to search, such as:

  UNITED STATES - ***CENSUS***
  RHODE ISLAND - ***MILITARY RECORDS***
  RHODE ISLAND, WASHINGTON - ***GENEALOGY***
  RHODE ISLAND, WASHINGTON, SOUTH KINGSTON - ***VITAL RECORDS***

The section headings in this outline match the names of record types used in the Family History Library Catalog.

ARCHIVES AND LIBRARIES

The following archives, libraries, and societies have collections or services helpful to researchers:

- Rhode Island State Archives
  337 Westminster St.
  Providence, RI 02903-3302
  Telephone: 401-277-2353
  Fax: 401-277-3199
- National Archives—New England Region
  380 Trapelo Road
  Waltham, MA 02154
  Telephone: 617-647-8100
  Fax: 617-647-8460
- Rhode Island Historical Society
  121 Hope St.
  Providence, RI 02906
  Telephone: 401-331-8575
  Fax: 401-351-0127
- Rhode Island Genealogical Society
  P.O. Box 433
  Greenville, RI 02828
- New England Historic Genealogical Society
  101 Newbury Street
  Boston, MA 02116-3007
  Telephone: 617-536-5740
  Fax: 617-536-7307
- American-French Genealogical Society
  78 Earle Street
  Woonsocket, RI 02895
  Telephone: 401-765-6141
  Fax: 401-765-6141
  P.O. Box 2010

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An important inventory of manuscript records of the state, county, and town archives is Clarence S. Brigham, *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1903,* vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association, 1904; FHL book 973 C4ah; film 896553 item 2).

Computer Networks and Bulletin Boards

Computers with modems can be useful tools for obtaining information from selected archives and libraries. In a way, computer networks themselves serve as a library. The Internet, certain computer bulletin boards, and commercial on-line services help family history researchers:

- Locate other researchers
- Post queries
- Send and receive E-mail
- Search large databases
- Search computer libraries
- Join in computer chat and lecture sessions

You can find computerized research tips and information about ancestors from Rhode Island in a variety of sources at local, state, national, and international levels. The list of sources is growing rapidly. Most of the information is available at no cost.

Addresses on the Internet change frequently. As of April 1997, the following sites are important gateways linking you to many more network and bulletin board sites:

- USGenWeb
  http://www.usgenweb.com/
  A cooperative effort by many volunteers to list genealogical databases, libraries, bulletin boards, and other resources available on the Internet for each county, state, and country.
- Roots-L
  http://www.rootsweb.com/roots-l/usa/
  A useful list of sites and resources. Includes a large, regularly-updated research coordination list.

For further details about using computer networks, bulletin boards, and news groups for family history research, see the *United States Research Outline* (30972), 2nd ed., "Archives and Libraries" section.

FamilySearch®

The Family History Library and some Family History Centers have computers with FamilySearch®. FamilySearch is a collection of computer files containing several million names. FamilySearch is a good place to begin your research. Some of the records come from compiled sources; some have been automated from original sources.

Computers with FamilySearch do *not* have access to computer on-line services, networks, or bulletin boards. However, those services are available at many public libraries, college libraries, and private locations.

BIBLE RECORDS

Six volumes of *Rhode Island Bible Records*, copied by Josephine Keefer Short and Mrs. Bentley W. Morse, are at the Rhode Island Historical Society and the Family History Library (FHL film 022395 items 4-9). Some Bible records at the Newport Historical Society (82 Touro Street, Newport, RI 02840) are also at the Family History Library (FHL film 945224).

The Family History Library has obtained two collections that include Bible records from the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). The collection for Rhode Island is on 23 films and is described in the "Genealogy" section of this outline. A collection of records from New York that also includes some Rhode Island records is on 12 films at the library. Both collections are partially indexed in E. Kay Kirkham, *An Index to Some of the Bibles and Family Records of the United States,* vol. 2 (Logan, Utah: Everton Publishers, 1984; FHL book 973 D22kk v.2; fiche 6089184).

BIOGRAPHY

The Family History Library collects biographical sources and important genealogical collections that contain biographical material. The Rhode Island Historical Society has the largest collection of biographical material for the state. Several collections are described in the "Genealogy" section of this outline.

A useful index is J. Carlyle Parker, *Rhode Island Biographical and Genealogical Sketch Index.* (Turlock, Calif.: Marietta Pub. Co., 1991; FHL book 974.5 D32p).

An excellent published source of biographies is *Representative Men and Old Families of Rhode Island: Genealogical and Historical Sketches of Prominent and Representative Citizens of Many of the Old Families,* 3 vols. (Chicago: J. H. Beers & Co., 1908; FHL book 974.5 D3r; films 982090-91 item 2).

CEMETERIES

The Rhode Island Historical Society has the largest collection of cemetery records for the state. The Society has the *Bates, Briggs,* and *Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR)* collections that contain inscriptions from Rhode Island cemeteries. These collections are also at the Family History Library. They are described in the "Genealogy" section of this outline.

Other important collections and indexes available at the Rhode Island Historical Society and on microfilm at the Family History Library include:

- Charles P. Benns and Martha A. Benns, *Rhode Island Cemetery Records, 1931-1941*, 6 volumes (FHL film 022424) and index (FHL film 022392).
- Henry E. Turner, *Cemetery Records of Rhode Island* (FHL film 022421).
- Clarence I. Brown, *Rhode Island Cemetery and Genealogical Records* (FHL films 022473-74).
- Nellie Brownell Potter, *Rhode Island Burial Grounds* (FHL film 022392 items 2-4).
- Frank T. Calef, [Cemetery Records] (FHL films 022366 item 15; 022368; 022388-89; 022396 item 2).
- James Newell Arnold, [Transcripts of Cemetery Records from Coventry, Cranston, Johnston, Lincoln, Scituate, and Warwick], 25 volumes (FHL films 022370-82).

About 50 additional volumes of transcripts by James Newell Arnold are at the Knight Memorial Library, 275 Elmwood Avenue, Providence, RI 02907. The towns are listed in *Rhode Island Roots,* 3 (June 1982): 22 (see the "Periodicals" section of this outline). The Family History Library does not have copies of these volumes.

Additional cemetery records have also been published in the *Rhode Island Genealogical Register* and in early issues of *Rhode Island History* (see the "Periodicals" section of this outline).

A guide to cemetery records is David W. Dumas, "Rhode Island Grave Records: A Bibliography," *Rhode Island Roots,* 3 (Winter 1977): 2-7 (see the "Periodicals" section of this outline).

CENSUS

Federal

Many federal census records are at the Family History Library, the National Archives, and other federal and state archives. The *United States Research Outline* provides more detailed information about the federal records.

The federal censuses from 1790 to 1920 are on microfilm at the Family History Library. The 1890 census was destroyed, but the 1890 Civil War Union veterans schedule and index are available at the Family History Library.

Statewide indexes are available for the 1790 to 1870 censuses in book form and for 1790 to 1850 on microfiche. A soundex (phonetic) index is available on microfilm for part of the 1880 and all of the 1900 and 1920 censuses.

Mortality schedules exist for 1850, 1860, 1870, and 1880. Copies of these are at the Rhode Island State Library, State House, Room 208, Providence, RI 02903.

Colonial and State

Colonial censuses (or similar lists of names) exist for 1747 to 1754, 1774, and 1782. These generally name the head of the household and the number of persons in the family. Many of these have been published, such as John R. Bartlett, comp., *Census of the Inhabitants of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, 1774* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1969; FHL book 974.5 X2pb, fiche 6046611).

A census of all males 16 or older was taken in 1777. See Mildred M. Chamberlain, *The Rhode Island 1777 Military Census* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1985; FHL book 974.5 M2cm).

State censuses were taken at 10-year intervals from 1865 to 1936. (The 1936 census was actually taken during 1935-36.) The 1895 census is missing. Microfilm copies are at the Family History Library for the complete 1865, 1875, 1885, 1915, 1925, and 1936 censuses. An index to the 1865 census is on FHL films 934776-99. The original 1865, 1875, 1885, and 1905 to 1936 state censuses are at the Rhode Island State Archives. The state censuses provide information similar to that in the federal censuses.

CHURCH RECORDS

Before 1900 the largest religious groups in Rhode Island were the Baptist, Congregational, Methodist, Protestant Episcopal, and Roman Catholic. Many of the early settlers were members of the Society of Friends.

Some records of the Baptist, Congregational, Episcopal, Methodist, and Society of Friends churches are published in volumes 7 to 11 of James Arnold, *The Vital Records of Rhode Island* (see the "Vital Records" section of this outline). A list of churches and the types of records available in 1941 is *Guide to the Church Vital Statistics in the State of Rhode Island* (Providence: Historical Records Survey, 1941; FHL book 974.5 V2h; film 982351 item 2; fiche 6046673).

The Family History Library has an extensive collection of church records for many denominations in Rhode Island. Many denominations have collected their records into central repositories. You can write to the following addresses to learn where their records are located:

Baptist

American Baptist-Samuel Colgate Historical Society
1106 S. Goodman Street
Rochester, NY 14620-2532
Telephone: 716-473-1740
Fax: 716-473-1740

An inventory of their holdings is in American Baptist Historical Society, *The Records of American Baptists in Rhode Island and Related Organizations* (Rochester, N.Y.: American Baptist Historical Society, 1981; FHL book 974.5 Al No. 12; fiche 6093151). Another useful guide is *Inventory of Church Archives in Rhode Island: Baptist Bodies* (Providence: Historical Records Survey, 1939; FHL book 974.5 K23n; film 982350 item 2).

Congregational

The Congregational Library
14 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108-3704
Telephone: 617-523-0470
Fax: 617-523-0491

Episcopal

Diocese of Connecticut
135 Asylum Ave.
Hartford, CT 06105-2295
Telephone: 860-233-4481
Fax: 860-523-1410

Methodist

Boston University Theological School Library
745 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, MA 02215
Telephone: 617-353-3034
Fax: 617-353-3061

United Methodist Archives Center
Drew University Library
P.O. Box 127
Madison, N.J. 07940
Telephone: 201-408-3189
Fax: 201-408-3909

Roman Catholic

Diocese of Providence
The Chancery Office
34 Fenner Street
Providence, RI 02903-3695
Telephone: 401-278-4500
Fax: 401-278-4548

A helpful history of the Roman Catholic Church is Thomas F. Cullen, *The Catholic Church in Rhode Island* (North Providence, R.I.: Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, 1936; FHL book 974.5 K2c; film 1598368 item 12).

Society of Friends

Archives of the New England Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends
Rhode Island Historical Society
121 Hope Street
Providence, RI 02906
Telephone: 401-331-8575
Fax: 401-751-7930

COURT RECORDS

Major Rhode Island courts that kept records of genealogical value were established as follows:

1647-1729 ***General Court*** was a statewide court with jurisdiction over civil and criminal matters. In 1671 it became the ***General Court of Trials.*** Many of the records of these courts are on microfilm at the Family History Library.

1730-pres. ***Courts of common pleas*** were established in each county in 1730. They had jurisdiction over most local criminal and civil matters. The library has records of the court of common pleas for Newport and Washington counties.

1729-pres. ***Superior Court of Judicature*** replaced the General Court of Trials. After 1747 several superior courts of judicature were established as countywide courts. The Family History Library has some of these records from 1729 to 1884.

1798-pres. ***Supreme Judicial Court*** was created from the Superior Court of Judicature. This court became the Supreme Court in 1843. Many of these records are at the Providence College Archives, Phillips Memorial Library, River Avenue and Eaton Street, Providence, RI 02918. This archives is gathering pre-1905 court records. The library has copies of some of these records.

1790s-pres. ***District courts*** have countywide jurisdiction over minor criminal cases.

The Family History Library has some colonial records from minor courts including court of admiralty, court of trials, court of vice-admiralty, justices' court, and the general council. The library has 78 microfilms of petitions to the general assembly, 1725 to 1867, when the assembly often served as a general court. The library also has many court records from Newport and Washington counties. You can obtain copies of other records by contacting the clerk's office in each county courthouse.

Rhode Island court records for 1636 to 1670 were published with every-name indexes in John R. Bartlett, *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations in New England,* 10 vols. (Providence: A. C. Green, 1856-1865; FHL book 974.5 N29r; on 7 films beginning with film 496842; listed in the Family History Library Catalog under RHODE ISLAND - COLONIZATION).

DIRECTORIES

Directories of heads of households have been published for major cities of Rhode Island. For example, the library has the following directories for Providence:

1778 . . . . . FHL book 974.52 E4c
1826 . . . . . FHL fiche 6044365
1856-60 . . . . . FHL fiche 6044374-78
1861-1933 . . . . . FHL films 1377340—
1930, 1932, etc. . . . FHL book 974.52/E1 E4s

EMIGRATION AND IMMIGRATION

People

Prestatehood settlers of Rhode Island generally were English Protestants, but liberal policies attracted French Huguenots, Blacks, Jews, and other minorities. Heavy Irish immigration began about 1830 and continued through the rest of the nineteenth century. A great influx of French Canadians began after the Civil War and continued to the turn of the century. Rhode Islanders leaving the state often went to areas such as Vermont and Nova Scotia.

Beginning about 1880, overseas emigration shifted from northern Europe to southern and eastern Europe. The Italians were the largest ethnic group to arrive at this time. Other groups who arrived in Rhode Island between 1880 and 1915 include the Portuguese colonials, Poles, and Jews from Russia.

Sources of information about ethnic groups, such as French Canadians, Blacks, and Jews, are listed in the Family History Library Catalog under RHODE ISLAND - MINORITIES.

Records

The major port of entry to New England is Boston. The Family History Library and the National Archives have passenger lists for Boston for 1820 to March 1874 and 1883 to 1935 (listed in the Family History Library Catalog under MASSACHUSETTS, SUFFOLK, BOSTON - EMIGRATION AND IMMIGRATION). The following indexes are also available:

- 1820-74. These years are indexed in the *Supplemental Index . . . Atlantic and Gulf Coast Ports . . .* (FHL films 418161-348). They are listed in the Family History Library Catalog under UNITED STATES - EMIGRATION AND IMMIGRATION - INDEXES.
- 1848-91 (on FHL films beginning with 205656), 1902-06, and 1906-20 (on FHL films beginning with 1724620). They are listed in the Family History Library Catalog under MASSACHUSETTS, SUFFOLK, BOSTON - EMIGRATION AND IMMIGRATION.

The Massachusetts State Archives also has Boston passenger lists for 1848 to 1874 and 1883 to 1891. This includes records for the nine years missing from the National Archives records. The 1848 to 1891 index described above is an index to the state lists, but it can also be used for the National Archives records.

Incomplete nineteenth-century passenger lists for Bristol and Warren, 1820 to 1870 (FHL film 830231); Providence, 1820 to 1867 (FHL films 830245-46); and Newport, 1820 to 1857 (FHL film 830236) are available at the Family History Library and the National Archives. These lists are in *Copies of Lists of Passengers Arriving at Miscellaneous Ports . . . Atlantic and Gulf Coasts . . .* listed in the Family History Library Catalog under UNITED STATES - EMIGRATION AND IMMIGRATION. For indexes to these lists, see *Supplemental Index to Passenger Lists . . . Atlantic and Gulf Coast Ports . . .* listed in the Family History Library Catalog under UNITED STATES - EMIGRATION AND IMMIGRATION - INDEXES.

The Family History Library and the National Archives have passenger lists for Providence, 1912 to 1916 (FHL films 1421060-68), and book indexes, 1911 to 1934 (FHL films 1375940-54). These are listed in the Family History Library Catalog under RHODE ISLAND, PROVIDENCE, PROVIDENCE - EMIGRATION AND IMMIGRATION.

The Rhode Island Historical Society has:

- Custom House passenger lists and alien passenger reports, 1798-1870.
- Providence crew lists, 1803-84 (FHL film 022383 item 2 has lists for 1829-57).
- Marine Hospital records, 1798-1870.

The Rhode Island State Archives and the Family History Library have copies of maritime papers, 1723 to 1790, and admiralty papers, 1726 to 1777.

More detailed information on U.S. immigration sources is in the *United States Research Outline* (30972).

Also consult passenger lists of other New England ports and for ports in Canada. Records of Canadian border entries from 1895 to 1949 are on 400 films at the Family History Library (FHL films 1472801-1473201). There are also soundex indexes for the records from 1895-1924 and 1924-1952. The records are in the Family History Library Catalog under UNITED STATES - EMIGRATION AND IMMIGRATION.

Names of immigrants listed in published sources to about 1920 are indexed in P. William Filby, *Passenger and Immigration Lists Index,* 15 vols. (Detroit: Gale Research, 1981-; FHL book 973 W32p). The first three volumes are a combined alphabetical index published in 1981. Supplemental volumes have been issued annually. There are also cumulative indexes.

GAZETTEERS

Rhode Island and New England histories list and describe places in Rhode Island. Other guides to place names include:

Gannett, Henry. *A Geographic Dictionary of Connecticut and Rhode Island.* 1894. Reprint. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1978. (FHL book 974 E5g; fiche 6046786.)

Rhode Island—A Guide to the Smallest State. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1937. (FHL book 974.5 E6ri.)

GENEALOGY

Most archives, historical societies, and genealogical societies have special collections and indexes of genealogical value. These must usually be searched in person.

Manuscript Collections and Indexes

Rhode Island Historical Society. The largest collection of manuscript genealogical material is at the Rhode Island Historical Society. The society's catalog indexes both published and manuscript genealogies, the DAR collection, Benn's index to Rhode Island grave records (see the "Cemeteries" section of this outline), and some genealogies of Rhode Island families that have been published in periodicals. The catalog was filmed in 1950 (FHL films 022425-26).

Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Collection. This collection consists of transcripts of Bible, cemetery, church, marriage, death, obituary, and will records. It was microfilmed in 1971 at the DAR Library in Washington, D.C., and is available at the Rhode Island Historical Society and at the Family History Library on 23 microfilms (on FHL films beginning with 855238). The volumes are generally arranged by county, and each is indexed. The Rhode Island Historical Society has a *DAR Records Card Index* to the volumes.

Sidney S. Rider Collection. This valuable, though difficult to use, collection is at the John Hay Library (Brown University, Providence, RI 02912). This collection of 5,000 books and 10,000 pamphlets includes periodicals, correspondence, newspaper clippings and index (about 1808 to 1868), church histories, military records, city directories, local histories, biographies, and many manuscript sources such as private journals, deeds, and wills.

Bates Collection of Genealogical Data by Louise Prosser Bates. This 88-volume collection is on microfilm at the Rhode Island Historical Society and at the Family History Library (FHL films 022275-90). It contains abstracts of deeds, land grants, probate records, genealogies, town records, and cemetery records. The index to the collection is on FHL films 022268-74.

Genealogical Index Rhode Island Records by Frank T. Calef. This is a card index to Rhode Island town vital records, freeman lists, cemetery burials, colonial censuses, and other records. It was microfilmed in 1950 at the Rhode Island Historical Society and is at the Family History Library (FHL films 022431-72). It is listed in the Family History Library Catalog under RHODE ISLAND - VITAL RECORDS - INDEXES.

Briggs Collection by Anthony Tarbox Briggs. This large collection is at the Rhode Island Historical Society. It contains typed transcripts of wills, cemetery records, vital records, and family records for families from the towns of West Greenwich, Exeter, and Coventry. The volumes and an index were microfilmed in 1950 (FHL films 022293-317).

Collection Rhode Island Family Records by Martha A. Benns. This is a collection of will abstracts and family records at the Rhode Island Historical Society. The Family History Library has a microfilm copy (FHL film 022423) and the index (FHL film 022392).

Many additional collections, some of which are listed in the Family History Library Catalog, are described in *Rhode Island Sources for Family Historians and Genealogists* (see the "For Further Reading" section of this outline).

Published Genealogies and Indexes

Many genealogies have been researched and published for the colonial states. Names of the earliest immigrants and settlers have been identified. Examples of numerous published sources are:

Austin, John Osborne. *The Genealogical Dictionary of Rhode Island: Comprising Three Generations of Settlers Who Came Before 1690 (with Many Families Carried to the Fourth Generation).* Reprint with additions and corrections. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1978. (FHL book Q 974.5 D26a 1978; 1887 ed. on film 022257; index on film 022258.)

Cutter, William Richard. *New England Families: Genealogical and Memorial.* 4 vols. 1913. Reprinted and enlarged. New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1914. (FHL book 974 D2c 1913; films 164686-89; and FHL book 974 D2c 1914; films 962340-41; fiche 6051510-12.) A surname index to this and other series by Cutter relating to New England is Norma Olin Ireland and Winifred Irving, *Cutter Index: A Consolidated Index of Cutter's Nine Genealogy Series* (Fallbrook, Calif.: Ireland Indexing Service, 197?; FHL book 974 D2ci; film 1036507 item 6; fiche 6046737).

Genealogies of Rhode Island Families: From Rhode Island Periodicals. 2 vols. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1983. (FHL book 974.5 D2g.) This indexes six periodicals.

Greenlaw, William Prescott. *The Greenlaw Index of the New England Historic Genealogical Society.* 2 vols. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1979. (FHL book Q 974 D22g.) This is an index to many local histories and genealogies published between 1900 and about 1940.

New England Historic Genealogical Society. *English Origins of New England Families: From the New England Historical and Genealogical Register.* First Series, 3 vols., 1984. Second Series, 3 vols., 1985. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co. (FHL book 974 D2e; fiche 6047919-21; second series 974 D2en; fiche 6047922-24.)

Rider, Fremont, ed. *American Genealogical-Biographical Index.* Vols. 1-186+. Middletown, Conn.: Godfrey Memorial Library, 1952-. (FHL book 973 D22ag.) This is a continuing series. As of 1997, surnames A-Walker have been indexed. An earlier version in 48 volumes was published as *The American Genealogical Index,* 1942-51. (FHL book 973 D22am; films 1425577-86.)

Savage, James. *A Genealogical Dictionary of the First Settlers of New England. . . .* 4 vols. 1860-62. Reprint with added cross-index. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1965. (FHL book 974 D2s; film 1321056 items 1-4.)

HISTORY

The following important events in the history of Rhode Island affected political boundaries, record keeping, and family movements:

1636	Religious dissenters from Massachusetts founded Providence. Settlements soon followed at Portsmouth, Newport, and Warwick. Each town kept deed, probate, and vital records.
1663	A royal charter created the United Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations.
1747	Rhode Island gained the towns of Bristol, Little Compton, Tiverton, and Warren from Massachusetts.
1790	Rhode Island was the last of the original thirteen colonies to ratify the Constitution and become a state.
1830s-1840s	As the factory system developed, thousands of foreign laborers began moving into Rhode Island.
1861-1865	During the Civil War, 25,000 men from Rhode Island served in the Union armed forces.
1862	Rhode Island gained the town of East Providence and part of the town of Pawtucket from Massachusetts. Massachusetts received Fall River, which earlier had been the northern part of Tiverton.

A helpful source for studying the history of Rhode Island is Edward Field, ed., *State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations at the End of the Century,* 3 vols. (Boston: Mason Publishing Co, 1902; FHL book 974.5 H2f; film 1033776; fiche 6046716).

A bibliography of local histories for Rhode Island is in Roger Parks, ed., *Rhode Island: A Bibliography of Its History* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1983; FHL book 974.5 H23r).

LAND AND PROPERTY

Colony Records

The earliest land grants were made by the colony. The records of these grants are known as "land evidences." The original documents are at the Rhode Island State Archives. Land evidences for 1648 to 1696 have also been published in Dorothy Worthington, *Rhode Island Land Evidences,* 1921, Reprint (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1970; FHL 1921 ed. on film 564389; index on FHL film 022254).

Some land transfers and grants are recorded in the proceedings of the general assembly, 1646 to 1851. These are at the Rhode Island State Archives and at the Family History Library on 18 microfilms.

Proprietors' Records

In the colonial period, the general assembly granted land to groups of colonists who became the

proprietors of the town. These proprietors divided the land into portions owned by individuals and portions owned in common. The proprietors, in turn, sold land to other individuals. The proprietors' records begin as early as 1659 for the Narragansett area (southern Rhode Island). Transcripts of some of the records, 1659 to 1686, are in James N. Arnold, *The Records of the Proprietors of the Narragansett* (Providence: Narragansett Historical Publishing, 1894; FHL film 1033805 item 2).

Town Records

After proprietors sold their land or a town was incorporated, the town recorded deeds and mortgages. The Family History Library has copies of the town records to about 1880. From the Providence Recorder of Deeds, for example, the library has 166 microfilms of deeds and mortgages for the years 1677 to 1876. Documents from the town of Providence and other early settlements have been published in many volumes.

MAPS

The Rhode Island Historical Society's map collection is very extensive. The Family History Library has a few maps, including some of the colonial era and early plantations.

A helpful atlas is Marion I. Wright and Robert J. Sullivan, *The Rhode Island Atlas* (Providence: Rhode Island Publication Society, 1982; FHL book 974.5 E6w).

Atlases with Rhode Island maps for the years 1790, 1810, 1823, 1838, 1857, 1862, 1878, 1884, and 1917 are on FHL film 002083.

MILITARY RECORDS

The *U.S. Military Records Research Outline* (34118) provides more information on federal military records and search strategies.

Many military records are found at the Family History Library, the National Archives, and other federal and state archives. The *United States Research Outline* provides more information about the federal records. For Rhode Island, the following sources are also very helpful:

Colonial Wars (1731-1774)

Published rosters of soldiers include:

Chapin, Howard. M. *A List of Rhode Island Soldiers and Sailors in King George's War: 1740-1748.* Providence: Rhode Island Historical Society, 1920. (FHL book 974.5 M2ch; film 1425647 item 11.)

Chapin, Howard M. *Rhode Island in the Colonial Wars; A List of Rhode Island Soldiers and Sailors in the Old French and Indian War 1755-1762.* Providence: Rhode Island Historical Society, 1918. (FHL book 974.5 M2c; film 1425576 item 5.)

The Rhode Island Historical Society has additional military records of soldiers who served from 1731 to 1774 (FHL films 953925-30).

Revolutionary War (1775-1783)

The Family History Library and the National Archives have the federal service and pension records and indexes for the Revolutionary War. The Rhode Island Historical Society also has military papers for 1774 to 1792 (FHL film 953931-37; 954925-55).

A published roster of soldiers is in Benjamin Crowell, *Spirit of '76 in Rhode Island. . . .* (Boston: A. J. Wright, 1850; FHL book 974.5 M2cbe; fiche 6046885). An index is in volume 12 of *Vital Records of Rhode Island* (see the "Vital Records" section of this outline). This volume also lists officers and pensioners living in 1820, 1835, and 1840 (FHL book 974.5 V2a; film 908273 item 2; fiche 6046912).

War of 1812 (1812-1815)

The Family History Library has copies of the National Archives federal service and pension indexes. The library also has state military papers that include some enlistment certificates for soldiers (FHL films 954957-58).

Civil War (1861-1865)

Indexes to service (FHL films 821940-46) and pension records of Union army soldiers are on film at the Family History Library. The service and pension records are available only at the National Archives.

A published roster of soldiers is in Rhode Island Adjutant General, *Annual Report of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations For the Year 1865,* 1866, Revised, 2 vols. (Providence: E. L. Freeman, 1893-95; FHL book 974.5 M2ri; film 982363; fiche 6046949; 1866 ed. on film 908721). This includes each soldier's residence, his date of enlistment, his dates of muster-in and muster-out, and regimental sketches.

World War I (1917-1918)

World War I draft registration cards for men age 18 to 45 may list address, birth date, birthplace, race, nationality, citizenship, and next of kin. Not all registrants served in the war. For registration cards for Rhode Island, see:

United States. Selective Service System. *Rhode Island, World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918.* National Archives Microfilm Publications, M1509. Washington, D.C.: National Archives, 1987-1988. (On FHL films beginning with 1852212.)

To find an individual's draft card, it helps to know his name and residence at the time of registration. The cards are arranged alphabetically by county, within the county by draft board, and then alphabetically by surname within each draft board.

Most counties had only one board; large cities had several. A map showing the boundaries of individual draft boards is available for most large cities. Finding an ancestor's street address in a city directory will help you in using the draft board map. There is an alphabetical list of cities that are on the map. For a copy of this map, see:

United States. Selective Service System. *List of World War One Draft Board Maps.* Washington, D.C.: National Archives. (FHL film 1498803.)

Additional Military Records

The Rhode Island State Archives has a card index to military and naval records for the years 1774 to 1805. The Family History Library has a copy on 19 microfilms (FHL films 934758-74 and 1000369).

State records from the World War I to the present are at the Adjutant General's Office, Command Readiness Center, 645 New London Ave., Cranston, RI 02920-3097, Telephone: 401-457-4102, Fax: 401-457-4338.

NATURALIZATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Naturalization records have been filed in the town, county, and district courts. Papers filed since 1729 are often found in the records of the superior courts of judicature and courts of common pleas. The Family History Library has microfilm copies of some files, including declarations from Newport County (1888 to 1905) and Washington County (1881 to 1900).

New England naturalization records for 1791 to 1906 were copied and indexed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in the late 1930s. Some of the records are more recent than 1906. The index gives the name and location of the court, the date of naturalization, and the volume and page number (or certificate number) of the naturalization record. The copies and index are at the National Archives—New England Region. The National Archives in Washington, D.C., and the Family History Library have microfilm copies of the index (FHL films 1429709-16).

The National Archives—New England Region also has records of the:

- U.S. District Court (1842-44, 1888-1945)
- U.S. Circuit Court (1846-84, 1893-1906)

If you need naturalization records after September 1906, contact the National Archives—New England Region or a federal office of the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

NEWSPAPERS

Rhode Island's first newspaper was published in 1732. The Rhode Island Historical Society has copies of virtually all newspapers published in the state. They have some newspaper indexes. The Family History Library has not acquired copies of Rhode Island newspapers.

Marriage and death notices for 1758 to 1833 from several major Rhode Island newspapers have been published in volumes 12 to 21 of James N. Arnold, *Vital Record of Rhode Island 1636-1850* (see the "Vital Records" section of this outline). There are surname indexes in most of the volumes.

For additional indexes, see *A Guide to Newspaper Indexes in New England* ([Holden, Mass.]: New England Library Association, 1978; FHL book 974 B32n; fiche 6051391).

PERIODICALS

The major periodicals and magazines helpful for Rhode Island research are:

The New England Historical and Genealogical Register. 1847-. Published by the New England Historic Genealogical Society, 101 Newbury St., Boston, MA 02116. (FHL book 974 B2ne; compact disc 33 pt. 1-9; some volumes are on film.) There are cumulative indexes to 1994 in book form and on compact disc.

Rhode Island Genealogical Register. 1978-. Published by the Rhode Island Families Association, P.O. Box 585, East Princeton, MA 01517. (FHL book 974.5 D2ri.)

Rhode Island History. 1942-. Published by the Rhode Island Historical Society, 110 Benevolent Street, Providence, RI 02906. (FHL book 974.5 H25ri.)

Rhode Island Roots. 1973-. Published by the Rhode Island Genealogical Society, P.O. Box 433, Greenville, RI 02828. (FHL book 974.5 D25r.)

PROBATE RECORDS

Probate matters were recorded by town councils until each town established a probate court. Many of the published town records include references to wills and estate matters.

An excellent index to a large number of Rhode Island wills to about 1850 is Robert S. Wakefield, *Index to Wills in Rhode Island Genealogical Register, Volumes 1 through 4* (Warwick, R.I.: Plymouth Colony Research Group, 1982; FHL book 974.5 D2ri index). The *Rhode Island Genealogical Register* (see the "Periodicals" section of this outline) continues to publish abstracts of wills.

The probate records of Providence, 1670 to 1730, have been published (see the "Town Records" section of this outline). Also see Frank Calef's index to Providence probate records of 1663 to 1775 (FHL film 022385).

The general council, also known as the Council of Probate, kept minutes and documents dealing with probate appeals for the years 1667 to 1813 (FHL films 954936-37).

You can obtain copies of the original court records by contacting the town clerk. Addresses of the town clerks are listed in *Genealogist's Handbook for New England Research* (see the "For Further Reading" section of this outline). The Family History Library has microfilm copies of many of these records. They are listed in the Family History Library Catalog under RHODE ISLAND, [COUNTY], [TOWN] - PROBATE RECORDS. From the municipal courts of Providence, for example, the library has 39 films of probate proceedings (1798-1920), will books (1678-1899), and dockets and indexes (1646-1921).

TAXATION

Some tax lists are in the town records, and many are at the Rhode Island State Archives.

TOWN RECORDS

In New England, the town clerk is the local record keeper. The earliest records are called proprietors' records. Town records generally begin with the founding of a town and are kept to the present.

Town records may contain records of births, marriages, burials, cemeteries, appointments, earmarks, estrays (records of stray animals), freemen's oaths (men becoming eligible to vote), land records, mortgages, name changes, care of the poor, school records, surveys, tax lists, town meeting minutes, voter registrations, and "warnings out" (of town).

The Family History Library has microfilms of town council and town meeting records for most Rhode Island towns. These generally date from the settlement of the town to the 1880s. Some records have been transcribed and published, such as *The Early Records of the Town of Providence,* 21 vols. (Providence: Snow and Farnham, City Printers, 1892-1915; FHL book 974.52 N2p; on 8 films beginning with film 418109).

Related sources are:

Certificates for Deputies and Freemen of Rhode Island Towns, 1663 to 1778 (FHL films 953922-24) and an index (FHL films 934806 item 2 and 934807-8) are listed in the Family History Library Catalog under RHODE ISLAND - OFFICIALS AND EMPLOYEES.

Pierce, Ebenezer Weaver. *Civil, Military and Professional Lists of Plymouth and Rhode Island Colonies: Comprising Colonial, County, and Town Officers, Clergymen, Physicians and Lawyers. . . .* 1881. Reprint. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1968. (FHL book 974 M2p; film 897454; fiche 6046832.)

Smith, Joseph Jencks. *Civil and Military Lists of Rhode Island.* 2 vols. Providence: Preston and Rounds, 1901. (FHL book 974.5 N2s; films 925437-38; fiche 6046905.)

VITAL RECORDS

Town Records of Births, Marriages, and Deaths

Records of births, marriages, and deaths have been kept by town clerks since the 1630s. In 1700 the laws concerning vital records registration were made more specific, and the records after that time are more complete.

An index to many pre-1850 births and marriages in Rhode Island is the *International Genealogical Index*® found at the Family History Library and Family History Centers. Also use compiled collections and indexes, such as Calef's and others described in the "Genealogy" section of this outline. Town minutes and land evidences sometimes also give vital statistics information.

Many vital records have been published in genealogical periodicals and other sources, including:

Arnold, James N. *Vital Records of Rhode Island 1636-1850: A Family Register for the People.* 21 vols. Providence: Narragansett Historical Publishing, 1891-1912. (FHL book 974.5 V2a; on films beginning with film 908269; fiche 6046912.) The town records that are indexed in this collection are listed in *Genealogical Research in New England,* p. 175-78 (see the "For Further Reading" section of this outline).

Beaman, Alden G. *Vital Records of Rhode Island, New Series.* vols. 1-. Princeton, Mass.: publisher varies, 1975-. (FHL book 974.5 V2b.) This contains abstracts of probate, cemetery, marriage, death, and other records that give evidence of vital information for Kent, Newport, and Washington counties.

Snow, Edwin M., and Charles V. Chapin. *Alphabetical Index of the Births, Marriages and Deaths Recorded in Providence.* 32 vols. Providence: publisher varies, 1879-[1946]. This includes records for 1636 to 1945. (The library has vols. 1-25, 27, 29-32; FHL book 974.52 V2p; on films beginning with film 547197 item 3; fiche 6051317.)

A collection of pre-1700 marriage records in New England was compiled by Clarence Torrey. The New England Historic Genealogical Society has the original manuscript collection. The Family History Library has a film copy. An index to the marriages is Clarence Almon Torrey, *New England Marriages Prior to 1700* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1985; FHL book 974 V2t; film 1320548 item 14). Films 929494-500 have Mr. Torrey's source notes. A supplement has been published, Melinda Lutz Sanborn, *Supplement to Torrey's Marriages Prior to 1700* (FHL book 974 V2T supp.).

The Family History Library has an extensive collection of pre-1900 Rhode Island town vital records. For example, 19 microfilms from the city registrar of Providence include birth, marriage, and death records (1698-1879) and indexes (1636-1900). These are listed in theFamily History Library Catalog under RHODE ISLAND, PROVIDENCE, PROVIDENCE - VITAL RECORDS. You can also write to the town clerks for information.

State Records of Births, Marriages, and Deaths

Statewide registration of births, marriages, and deaths began in January 1853 and, by 1915, was generally complied with. The Family History Library has not obtained copies of the state records.

Copies of marriage and death records from 1853 to 1964 are available at the Rhode Island State Records Center. All birth, marriage, and death records since 1853 are at:

Rhode Island Department of Health
Vital Records
#3 Capitol Hill, Rm 101
Providence, RI 02908-5097
Telephone: 401-277-2812

The current fees for obtaining copies of the state's records are listed in *Where to Write for Vital Records: Births, Deaths, Marriages, and Divorces* (Hyattsville, Md.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, March 1993; FHL book 973 V24wv). Copies of this booklet are at the library and many Family History Centers. You can also write to the Division of Vital Statistics for current information. Members of an incorporated genealogical society may view and copy the records.

Divorce Records

Early divorce records were recorded in the supreme court records. Divorce records 1905 to present are at:

Clerk of Family Court
1 Dorrance Plaza
Providence, RI 02903
Telephone: 401-277-3340

Inventory of Vital Records

The history and availability of vital records is described in *Guide to the Public Vital Statistics Records: Births, Marriages, Deaths, in the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations* (Providence: Historical Records Survey, 1941; FHL book 974.5 V2h; film 982351; fiche 6046673).

FOR FURTHER READING

For more detailed information about research and records in Rhode Island, see:

Crandall, Ralph J., ed. *Genealogical Research in New England.* Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1984. (FHL book 974 D27gr.)

Eichholz, Alice, ed. *Ancestry's Red Book: American State, County, and Town Sources.* Rev. ed. Salt Lake City: Ancestry, 1992. (FHL book 973 D27rb 1992; computer number 594021.) Contains bibliographies and background information on history and ethnic groups. Also contains maps and tables showing when each county was created.

Farnham, Charles W. *Rhode Island Colonial Records.* Salt Lake City: Genealogical Society, 1969. (FHL book 929.1 W893 I25; film 897217 item 23; fiche 6039409.)

New England Library Association. *A Genealogist's Handbook for New England Research.* Rev. ed. Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1993. (FHL book 974 D27g 1993; the 1981 edition is on fiche 6051401.)

Sperry, Kip. *Rhode Island Sources for Family Historians and Genealogists.* Logan, Utah: Everton Publishers, 1986. (FHL book 974.5 D23s.)

COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

The Family History Library welcomes additions and corrections that will improve future editions of this outline. Please send your suggestions to:

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